

UPDATE

THEY SAID IT WOULDN'T HAPPEN AGAIN, HOWEVER.....

The muffled rumbling of the snow plows continued well into the night. Leonard Farkas, Director of Engineering and Snow Removal, and Assistant Commanding Officer, Glenn Schneider, surveyed the scene with awe and wonder. "We'll be digging out of here for the next week," Farkas said, as he sank up to his waist in the white stuff. Little did he realize that by the middle of the week, up to 600 cars would be rescued from the Arctic wasteland, known to employees as "The Parking Lot."

But backed by an able, hard working crew, known as the "Blizzard Battalion," consisting of Paul Auve, Gerald Butz, Bill Doney, Ray Feather, Jim Hofstetter, Larry Kincaid, Charles Kubat, Ed Kurtz, Jerry O'Leary, Allan Richards, Ryan Ritter, Don Wentzel, Ricky Shoemaker, Steve Schneider, and Dale Hood, they began their work.

Upstairs on the seventh floor, Mary Strzelecki, R.N., and Barbara Knecht, R.N., gazed out into the white dusk. "How on earth will 2nd shift and the student nurses from Allentown get here?" they wondered. Even while they stood, the Whitehall, Emmaus, and Cetronia Ambulance Corps, and volunteers with 4-wheel drive vehicles were busily ferrying needed staff members to and from the Center.

Tom Birmingham, Director of Housekeeping Services, checked the time: 5:00 P.M. He'd been at it for a while now with only Mary Druckenmiller, Rodney Druckenmiller, Jester Gordon, Earl Hillegass, and Elizabeth Holmes digging out and making it in for the night shift. Day shift crew, George Carr, June Crout, Shirley Doney, Carolyn Gessner, Mary Helfrich, Donna Hengeveld, Joe Kristopaitis, Lester Lauer, Mark Menges, Dale Rhoads, and Florence Schoenly, were busily contemplating arrangements for the evening. They approached the reservation desk (previously the Personnel Office) where moonlighters, Evan Reichlin and Pat Case queried, "Bed, litter, or chair?"

"They have to eat," declared Jerry Miller to Chef Kuno Stadelmann, and eat heartily they did. Patients, employees, and visitors were all fed by a small but able crew. Kitchen and dining room were capably manned by Floyd Christman, Dave Correll, Jeff Bloss, Joe Beam, Carol Hosfeld, Eileen Sine, Althea Chwastiak, Sheryl Ayers, Sara Demkee, Gloria Sweitzer, Beth Wittman, Margaret Fitzgerald, Marlene Machusak, Al Schlosser, Lois Helfrich, Isabel Shearman, James Martin, and Michelle Sabb.

A dedicated group of high school and college students helped save the day by staying through the night along with the remaining full-time staff. Hats off to David Farkas, Kerry Gerlach, Bryan Kukitz, Robert Pollack, Richard Snyder, Debbie Romanchik, Monica Stevens, and Sue Weber.

Barri Lyons, new employee in the Food Service Department, was scheduled to begin work Monday. Monday turned into Monday, Monday night, and Tuesday. What a way to start a job!

While all inside were keeping warm and dry, the Blizzard Battalion continued their work, which for most had begun at 5:00 A.M. that morning and continued for some until 2:00 P.M., on Wednesday.

The storm had reached its height. In the Emergency Room, a dedicated staff stood ready to serve, but something was not right -- it was too quiet, too still. Then into the silence came a familiar voice - yes - it's Hawkeye! The sounds of M*A*S*H were coming from the TV in the waiting room. "But I want to watch Midway, Part II" lamented a disappointed viewer who went in search of a group more compatible with his wishes!

"One heart, 2 spades." "Ah, that must be my bridge game," commented Dr. Sugerman, as he hurried down the hall. Little did he know that a much more interesting card game was going on in the Conference Dining Room. Three Nursing Supervisors and a Unit Instructor were into a hot and heavy pinochle game with cards they borrowed from the stranded wife of a patient on GA. At 11:30 P.M., the final score was Strzelecki and Knecht, 5; Guzara and Danko, 3.

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Just about this time, the sleepers were investigating the accommodations. Larry Ruckle, Business Office, pushed his two litters together in Pre-Admission Testing, got comfortable, and realized too late that litters have brakes which have to be locked! We're glad he's not an escort! Dr. Finnegan somehow managed to acquire the CHICK table in orthopedic storage for the evening. O.R. personnel commented that he looked a little stiff the next morning!

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In CENTREX, Cathy Dills, Mary Ianelli, Maria Bauer, Madeline Kurtz, and Ann Doncevic were manning the switchboard. "Please page Pulmonary Function" came a call from the Heart Station, where Diane Helfrich, Meg Erbe, Joan Weber, Mary Ann Reese, and Tina Azar were attending to their duties. The phone rang. "Vic Stonebraker here," came a voice, but a loud swishing noise could be heard in the background. "Gary Haas and I are making sure that the Hubbard tank is still in order," he continued. "Colleen Moyer and Betty Moncrief are moon-lighting as aids up on the floor," stated Diane, "and we couldn't figure out why Bill Hoffert was the only one in the Pulmonary Lab." "Well, I'm in charge of beds and bath in P.T.," stated Victor, "so give me another page if you'd like a reservation."

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Meanwhile, back in Medical Records, Director, Joyce Schwenzer, was surveying the situation. Linda Heintzelman, Linda Fenstermacher, and Shirley Eisenhard were working feverishly at their tasks. Little did they know that the next morning they would have Dr. Keith Tingle as a volunteer transcriptionist, ably typing up Histories and Physicals.

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While the Big Snow continued to be a big drag, not all who stayed the night were able to enjoy a needed rest. Jewel Alpaugh, Admitting Supervisor, and Eva Beer, also of Admitting, alternated 3 hour shifts during the night. As it turned out, the elective admissions only dropped by one-third during the storm!

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Bunking in P.T. were Respiratory Techs, Barb Edroney, Ruth Garcia, Gray Moffett, and Frank Santaniello. Word has it that Dave Ott was pulling a marathon tour of duty, allowing everyone else to rest up. A peek into X-Ray, where techs, Lynn Gromis, Joan Silsdorf, and Barb Toczek crashed, revealed a quiet situation, while techs, Kathy McNellis and Pam Kreglow caught 40 winks on the 7th floor. Recovery Room, while certainly not as attractive as the Sheraton, was jammed with 8 people from Dietary; Bill McCarthy, Drew Zavada, Barry Howells, and Steve Berman from the Lab; and X-Ray's Bob Heisey; and Dispatcher, Steve Paroczay. Floyd Christman commented that next time he wanted a room where the lights would go out (the recovery room was a little bright for sound slumbering!)

Dawn on Tuesday, the 7th, was quite different from the preceeding day. The local geography, brilliant in the morning sun, teased the awakening group inside the Center. Down in the cafeteria, familiar faces were already serving breakfast. Biomedical Engineers, Joe Dozpat, Mike Spleen, Tom Fichter, and Dennis Feters, anticipating a busy day, were discussing how to bring in some of the nursing staff. A tired SPD crew, consisting of Carl Hein, Dave Perin, Ron Brown, Doug Fry, Helen Guth, Jane Brown, Rosalie and Cindy Montagner, and Phyllis Harding, all ate hearty, knowing too well that the day was going to be hectic. Captain Bill Holmes, Lieutenant Bob Renner, and "Huggy Bear" Reeve already had their hands full directing the driving employees to a parking spot. Members of the Blizzard Battalion were confiding to each other that their lack of sleep was at least in part due to the loud snoring which came from the corner of the room where Paul Auve was slumbering!

Business Office employees, Rita Schneider and June Weber, were rerouted from their normal duties to help out in the kitchen, while Ann Terleski and Sue Hawkey remained in the office. Elaine Walz, Short Procedure Unit, made her way to breakfast after spending her second night here and nearly collided with Rose Haas, who was breathlessly arriving in the lobby after one of her many trips to and from the hospital.

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Out in the lot, Engineering was trying to figure out which of the many sets of keys they had belonged to which buried car. And speaking of buried, Engineering promises to retrieve Debbie Starnowsky's key case sometime during the spring thaw. While that key case was hidden in the snow, Larry Kincaid was so busy he found a set of unidentified keys in his pocket when he returned to his home - oops! And who is that red-faced member of the snow crew standing out in the lot -- why Paul Aue who just got his reward -- a big kiss from one of the members of the nursing staff whose car was stranded in the lot!

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All tales have an ending and by Tuesday morning, about 150 employees not normally scheduled to work had slumbered within these walls. Let us not forget to mention those who came in Sunday night, including Associate Administrator, Valeria Boyer, who had anticipated what was to come. Many stayed through two and even three nights because they were needed.

Although this story only mentioned a few of the large number of staff members who gave their all, it is meant as a thank you to everyone. Many others spent hours shoveling out, driving other employees to work, and helping out outside of the hospital. From the patients, the Medical Staff, Administration, and fellow employees, our thanks to everyone.

We will not say that it won't happen again -- let's just hope not again this year!